

CLAIMS

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed is:

1. A method of tightening lacing on a shoe body, and about a foot of a wearer, in the shoe body, wherein first and second lacing elements are laced through respective first and second eyelets on first and second opposing sides of an expansion opening of the shoe body, whereby portions of the first and second lacing elements can be pulled through the respective first and second eyelets, each of the lacing elements passing through clasp structure, wherein a manual gripping feature is removably assembled to a clasp body, along first and second separate and distinct different paths, between the respective ones of the first and second eyelets and respective first and second ends of the respective lacing elements, the method comprising:

- (a) pulling on the lacing elements and thereby drawing portions of the lacing elements through the respective eyelets, and correspondingly through the clasp structure and tightening the shoe body about such foot of such wearer; and
- (b) while holding the lacing elements pulled in tightened relationship on the shoe body and about such foot of such wearer, applying a manual force to the manual gripping feature of the clasp structure which is removably assembled to the clasp body, and thereby engaging the clasp structure with the first and second lacing elements so as to temporarily retain the shoe body in a tightened condition about such foot of such wearer.

2. A method as in Claim 1, the pulling of the lacing elements comprising holding the first lacing element in the tightened condition while applying manual force to a second manual gripping feature of the clasp structure, and holding the second lacing element in the tightened condition while applying manual force to a second gripping feature of the clasp structure.

3. A method as in Claim 2 wherein the clasp structure comprises first and second clasps, having respective first and second manual gripping features, and wherein the first lacing element passes through and is engaged by the first clasp and wherein the first lacing element passes through and is engaged by, the second clasp, and wherein the first and second clasps, when so engaged, are disposed adjacent the respective ones of the first and second eyelets.

4. A method as in Claim 1, including first and second lacing loops on the respective first and second lacing elements, adjacent the respective first and second eyelets, the first and second lacing loops being threaded through the clasp structure, the pulling on the lacing elements comprising pulling on the lacing loops to thereby tighten the shoe body about such foot of such wearer.

5. A method as in Claim 4, further comprising pulling the first and second lacing loops in first and second different directions generally away from each other.

6. A method as in Claim 4, the pulling of the first and second lacing loops in the first and second different directions comprising pulling the respective lacing loops from the clasp in directions toward the left and right sides of the shoe body.

7. A method as in Claim 4, including threading the first and second loops into the clasp body through a centrally-disposed receiving aperture.

8. A method as in Claim 4, further comprising releasing the clasp structure from the lacing loops and traversing the lacing loops backward through the clasp structure so as to establish the first and second lacing loops in loose arrangement, whereby the loose arrangement enables drawing the left and right sides of the shoe body away from each other at the expansion opening thereby to enable expanding the expansion opening.

9. A method as in Claim 4, further comprising, to establish the first and second lacing loops, threading the first and second lacing elements each outwardly away from the shoe body through a next adjacent eyelet and then inwardly through a terminal eyelet.

10. A method as in Claim 4, further comprising anchoring at least one of the first and second lacing elements to the shoe body at a location on the respective lacing element which is between a lacing end on the respective lacing element and a portion of the lacing element which is adjacent one of a terminal eyelet and a respective next adjacent eyelet.

11. A method as in Claim 4, further comprising anchoring at least one of the first and second lacing elements to the shoe body.

12. A method as in Claim 4 wherein the manual gripping feature is embodied on a cover of the clasp structure, which engages the clasp body, and wherein moving the cover away from the clasp body effectively releases the lacing elements from the gripping feature.

13. A method as in Claim 4, the clasp structure comprising a clasp body and a clasp cover, and wherein the tightening of the lacing elements on the shoe body comprises engaging latch structure on one of the clasp cover and the clasp body with the other of the clasp cover and the clasp body, and subsequently pulling the loops in generally opposing directions.

14. A method as in Claim 4, the clasp structure comprising a clasp cover, the engaging of the clasp structure with the first and second lacing elements comprising pinching the lacing elements between the clasp body and the clasp cover.

15. A method of tightening lacing on a shoe body of a shoe wherein first and second lacing elements are laced through eyelets on opposing first and second sides of an expansion opening of the shoe body, and through clasp structure, thereby defining first and second loosely extending lacing loops extending from the clasp structure, the method comprising:

- (a) grasping the first and second loosely extending lacing loops and pulling the first and second lacing loops in directions generally away from each other and thereby increasing the lengths of the lacing loops, the drawing of the first and second lacing loops relatively away from each other operating to draw the clasp structure against the shoe body and to draw the sides of the shoe body against a foot of a wearer of such shoe; and
- (b) engaging portions of the first and second lacing elements with respective gripping structure at the clasp structure so as to temporarily retain the lacing elements in a tightened configuration, thereby to retain the sides of the shoe body against such foot of such wearer.

16. A method as in Claim 15 wherein the first lacing loop extends from the first side of the expansion opening and communicates with a first eyelet on the first side of the expansion opening, and wherein the second lacing loop extends from the second side of the expansion opening and communicates with a second eyelet on the second side of the expansion opening

17. A method as in Claim 15, the pulling of the lacing loops comprising holding the first lacing loop in the tightened condition while engaging a first gripping structure of the clasp structure, and holding the second lacing element in the tightened condition while engaging a second gripping structure of the clasp structure.

18. A method as in Claim 15 wherein the clasp structure comprises first and second clasps, having respective first and second gripping structure, and wherein the first lacing element passes through and is engaged by the first clasp and wherein the

second lacing element passes through and is engaged by the second clasp, and wherein the first and second clasps, when so engaged, are disposed adjacent the respective ones of the first and second eyelets.

19. A method as in Claim 15, the pulling of the first and second lacing loops in the first and second different directions comprising pulling the respective lacing loops from the clasp structure in directions toward left and right sides of the shoe body.

20. A method as in Claim 15 including threading the first and second lacing loops into the clasp body through a centrally-disposed receiving aperture.

21. A method as in Claim 15, further comprising releasing the clasp structure from the lacing loops and traversing the lacing loops backward through the clasp structure so as to establish the first and second lacing loops in loose arrangement, whereby the loose arrangement enables drawing the left and right sides of the shoe body away from each other at the expansion opening thereby to enable expanding the expansion opening.

22. A method as in Claim 15, further comprising, to establish the first and second lacing loops, threading the first and second lacing elements each outwardly away from the shoe body through a next adjacent eyelet and then inwardly through a terminal eyelet.

23. A method as in Claim 15, further comprising anchoring at least one of the first and second lacing elements to the shoe body at a location on the respective lacing element which is between a lacing end on the respective lacing element and a portion of the lacing element which is adjacent one of a terminal eyelet and a respective next adjacent eyelet.

24. A method as in Claim 15, further comprising anchoring at least one of the first and second lacing elements to the shoe body.

25. A method as in Claim 15 wherein the gripping structure is embodied on a cover of the clasp structure which engages the clasp body, and wherein moving the cover away from the clasp body effectively releases the lacing elements from the gripping structure.

26. A method as in Claim 15, the clasp structure comprising a clasp body and a clasp cover, and wherein the tightening of the lacing elements on the shoe body comprises engaging latch structure on one of the clasp cover and the clasp body with the other of the clasp cover and the clasp body, and subsequently pulling the loops in generally opposing directions.

27. A method as in Claim 15, the clasp structure comprising a clasp cover, the engaging of the gripping structure with the first and second lacing elements comprising pinching the lacing elements between the clasp body and the clasp cover.

28. A method of handling lacing operations on a shoe (10), the shoe having a shoe body (12), a left side (14), a right side (16), an aperture (18) for inserting a wearer's foot therethrough for putting the shoe on and taking the shoe off, an expansion opening (20) having a distal end (22) in communication with the aperture (18), and a proximal end (23) remote from the aperture, left (24) and right (26) sides of the expansion opening (20) being defined by left (28) and right (30) edges of respective left and right upper sides of the shoe body (12), first and second arrays of eyelets (36) being disposed respectively along upper portions of each of the left (28) and right (30) sides of the shoe body (12), adjacent the left and right edges of the expansion opening (20), including terminal eyelets (38) adjacent the distal end of the expansion opening, and next adjacent eyelets (40) next adjacent the terminal eyelets (38) in each array, the terminal eyelets (38) and the next adjacent eyelets (40) being those eyelets closest to the distal end (22) of the expansion opening (20) and which are used for lacing purposes, the method comprising:

- (a) threading first and second lacing elements (44, 46) through the eyelets (36) along the left and right sides of the shoe body (12) including establishing first and second lacing loops (52, 54) of the lacing elements (44, 46), outside the foot-receiving cavity (19), each such lacing loop extending to at least one of the eyelets (36) adjacent the distal end (22) of the expansion opening (20);
- (b) securing the first and second lacing elements (44, 46) such that the respective lacing elements (44, 46) cannot, in routine lacing use, be removed from the shoe body (12);
- (c) threading the first and second lacing loops (52, 54) into and through a clasp (78, 278, 378) along first and second different threading paths so as to establish first and second loop ends (116) emerging from the clasp (78, 278, 378), each lacing loop (52, 54) having a first loop element extending loosely between the clasp (78, 278, 378) and a first one of the eyelets (36, 38, 40), and a second loop element extending loosely between the clasp (78, 278, 378) and the shoe body (12) or a second one of the eyelets (36), the first and second lacing loops passing through the clasp (78, 278, 378) along paths according to which pulling the first and second loops in first and second different directions can progressively draw the loosely-extending lacing loop elements through the clasp (78, 278, 378);
- (d) pulling the first and second loops in the first and second different directions so as to draw the loosely-extending loop elements through the clasp (78, 278, 378), and thereby to draw the clasp (78, 278) toward the shoe body (12) and tighten the lacing elements (44, 46) on the shoe body (12), and correspondingly to draw the left and right sides of the shoe body (12) toward each other, along the expansion opening (20); and
- (e) engaging portions of the first and second lacing elements (44, 46), at the lacing loops (52, 54), with respective lacing gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392) at the clasp (78, 278, 378), whereby the lacing gripping

structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392) temporarily retains the lacing loops (52, 54) in the tightened configuration.

29. A method as in Claim 28, the pulling of the first and second loops in the first and second different directions comprising pulling the respective loops from the clasp (78, 278, 378) in directions toward the left and right sides (14, 16) of the shoe body (12).

30. A method as in Claim 28, including threading the first and second loops (52, 54) into the clasp (78, 278, 378) through a centrally-disposed receiving aperture (86, 286, 386).

31. A method as in Claim 28, further comprising releasing the lacing gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392) from engagement with the lacing loops (52, 54), and with the lacing loops so released, traversing the lacing loops (52, 54) backward through the clasp (78, 278, 378) so as to re-establish the first and second loosely extending loop elements, whereby the loosely extending loop elements enable drawing the left and right sides (14, 16) of the shoe body away from each other at the expansion opening (20) thereby to enable expanding the expansion opening (20).

32. A method as in Claim 28, further comprising, to establish the first and second loops (52, 54), threading the first and second lacing elements (44, 46) each outwardly away from the shoe body (12) through a next adjacent eyelet (40) and then inwardly through a terminal eyelet (38).

33. A method as in Claim 28, comprising anchoring at least one of the first and second lacing elements (44, 46) to the shoe body (12) at a location on the respective lacing element (44, 46) which is between the respective lacing end and a portion of the lacing element (44, 46) which is adjacent one of the terminal eyelet (38) and the next adjacent eyelet (40).

34. A method as in Claim 28, further comprising anchoring at least one of the first and second lacing elements (44, 46) to the shoe body (12) inside the foot-receiving cavity (19).

35. A method as in Claim 31 wherein the clasp (78, 278, 378) comprises a cover (82, 282, 382) and a receptacle (80, 280, 380) and wherein moving the cover (82, 282, 382) away from the receptacle effectively releases the lacing elements (44, 46) from the gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392).

36. A method as in Claim 35 wherein the gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392) is embodied, at least in part, in the cover (82, 282, 382), and wherein moving the cover (82, 282, 382) away from the receptacle moves respective parts of the lacing gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392) away from the lacing .

37. A method as in Claim 28, the clasp comprising a receptacle (80, 280, 380) and a cover (82, 282, 382), and wherein tightening the lacing elements (44, 46) on the shoe (10) comprises engaging latch structure (98, 100, 393, 398) on one of the cover (82, 382) and the receptacle (80, 380) with the other of the cover (82, 382) and the receptacle (80, 380), and subsequently pulling the loops in opposing directions.

38. A method as in Claim 28, the retaining of the lacing elements (44, 46) in the clasp (78, 278, 378) by the gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392) being effected by pinching the lacing elements (44, 46) at the respective lacing gripping structure (97, 297, 302, 390, 304, 392).

39. A method as in Claim 34, the anchoring of the lacing element (44, 46) to the shoe body (12) further comprising cutting off an end portion (74) of the lacing element (44, 46).

40. A method as in Claim 28, the threading of the first and second lacing elements through the eyelets comprising reverse lacing of the lacing elements, wherein ends (48, 50) of the lacing elements are disposed adjacent the proximal end of the expansion opening (20), wherein the first and second lacing elements are comprised in a single lacing, and wherein a portion of the lacing extends across the expansion opening, between eyelets in the first and second arrays of eyelets, adjacent the distal end of the expansion opening.

41. A clasp adapted to receive first and second shoe lacing elements, said clasp comprising:

- (a) a clasp body; and
- (b) a clasp cover,

said clasp body comprising at least one receiving aperture adapted to receive the first and second lacing elements,

said clasp further comprising first and second exit apertures by which the lacing elements can pass out of said clasp, and gripping structure effective to grip the lacing elements to thereby temporarily prevent withdrawal of the lacing elements from the clasp.

42. A clasp as in Claim 41 wherein structure communicating with said first and second exit apertures operates, at least in part, as said gripping structure.

43. A clasp as in Claim 41 wherein said first and second exit apertures are disposed on opposing sides of said clasp.

44. A clasp as in Claim 41, said cover being operative to position said gripping structure for engagement with such lacing elements when said cover is closed over said clasp body.

45. A clasp as in Claim 41, further comprising latch structure on at least one of said clasp body and said cover, and wherein said clasp body and said cover are cooperatively structured such that closure of said cover over said clasp body, with said latch structure engaged, positions said gripping structure for gripping engagement with said lacing element.

46. A clasp as in Claim 41 wherein said cover and said clasp body are structured such that moving said cover away from said clasp body releases said lacing elements from engagement with said gripping structure.

47. A clasp as in Claim 41, said clasp further comprising at least one loop retainer effective to engage operative ends of the first and second loops, thereby to prevent inadvertent withdrawal of the first and second loops entirely out of said clasp.

48. A clasp as in Claim 41, structure of said clasp enabling passage of said lacing elements through said clasp from said at least one receiving aperture through said exit apertures along first and second different paths which emerge on opposing sides of said clasp.

49. A clasp as in Claim 41, said clasp comprising first and second exit apertures on a first side of said clasp, and first and second gripping chambers communicating with the first and second exit apertures, said clasp further comprising third and fourth exit apertures on a second side of said clasp, and third and fourth gripping chambers communicating with the third and fourth exit apertures.

50. A lacing kit, comprising:

- (a) at least one lacing (42) defining first and second lacing elements (44, 46);
and
- (b) a clasp, said clasp comprising
 - (i) a receptacle;
 - (ii) at least one receiving aperture in said receptacle, adapted to receive the first and second lacing elements,
 - (iii) first and second exit apertures by which the lacing elements can pass out of said clasp, and
 - (iv) gripping structure effective to grip the lacing elements to thereby temporarily prevent withdrawal of the lacing elements from the clasp.

51. A lacing kit as in Claim 50 wherein structure communicating with said first and second exit apertures operates, at least in part, as said gripping structure.

52. A lacing kit as in Claim 50, said gripping structure being operable as a one-way mechanical lacing gripper, enabling said lacing elements to pass through said clasp along one or more paths extending away from the receiving aperture and preventing casual withdrawal of said lacing elements from said clasp.

53. A lacing kit as in Claim 51 wherein a said lacing element can move longitudinally in alternating opposing directions through said exit apertures when said clasp is configured for gripping said lacing elements, and wherein said gripping structure is in communication with said exit apertures such that said lacing elements can move between said exit apertures and said gripping structure when said clasp is configured for gripping said lacing elements.

54. A lacing kit as in Claim 51 wherein said first and second exit apertures are disposed on opposing sides of said clasp.

55. A lacing kit as in Claim 50, further comprising a cover closeable over said receptacle, operative to position said gripping structure for engagement with said lacing elements when said cover is closed over said receptacle.

56. A lacing kit as in Claim 55 wherein said gripping structure comprises at least one slot in said clasp defined in part by said receptacle and in part by said cover, the slot being expandable by translation of said cover with respect to said receptacle.

57. A lacing kit as in Claim 56, further comprising spaced openings on opposing sides of said clasp, in communication with first and second said slots on the opposing sides of said clasp.

58. A lacing kit as in Claim 55 wherein said cover is connected to said receptacle for pivotation with respect to said receptacle to bring said cover into closing engagement over said receptacle, and to open said clasp to provide access to said receptacle.

59. A lacing kit as in Claim 55 wherein said cover is a separate and distinct element, separable from said receptacle for alternating closing said clasp and opening said clasp for access to said receptacle.

60. A lacing kit as in Claim 55, further comprising latch structure on at least one of said receptacle and said cover, and wherein said receptacle and said cover are cooperatively structured such that closure of said cover over said receptacle, secured by said latch structure, positions said gripping structure for gripping engagement with said lacing elements.

61. A lacing kit as in Claim 55 wherein said receptacle and said cover are structured such that moving said cover away from said receptacle releases said lacing elements from engagement with said gripping structure.

62. A lacing kit as in Claim 50, said clasp further comprising at least one loop retainer effective to engage operative ends of the first and second loops, thereby to prevent inadvertent withdrawal of the first and second loops entirely out of said clasp.

63. A lacing kit as in Claim 50, further comprising a mechanical holding device (56) adapted for attachment to at least one of said lacing elements and adapted to block passage of the respective lacing element through an eyelet of a shoe.

64. A lacing kit as in Claim 50, structure of said clasp enabling passage of said lacing elements through said clasp from said at least one receiving aperture through said exit apertures along first and second different paths which emerge on opposing sides of said clasp.

65. A lacing kit as in Claim 50 wherein the first and second paths are mirror-image paths.

66. A lacing kit as in Claim 50, said clasp comprising first and second exit apertures on a first side of said clasp, and a first gripping slot between, and communicating with, said first and second exit apertures, said clasp further comprising third and fourth exit apertures on a second side of said clasp, and a second gripping slot between and communicating with said third and fourth exit apertures.

67. A lacing kit as in Claim 66 wherein said slots connect with the exit apertures at elevations displaced from vertical mid-points of the exit apertures, such that, when the

lacing loops are pulled away from the clasp in horizontal directions, side edges of the exit apertures interfere with movement of the lacing loops into the slots.

68. A lacing kit as in Claim 67 wherein the slots connect with the exit apertures below the vertical mid-points of the exit apertures.

69. In combination, a shoe, and a lacing system incorporated into the shoe,

- (a) said shoe comprising
 - (i) a shoe body (12),
 - (ii) a left side (14) and a right side (16),
 - (iii) an aperture (18) for inserting a wearer's foot therethrough for putting the shoe on and taking the shoe off,
 - (iv) an expansion opening (20) having a proximal end (23), and a distal end (22) in communication with the aperture, left (24) and right (26) sides of the expansion opening being defined by left (28) and right (30) edges of respective left and right upper sides of the shoe body, and
 - (v) first and second arrays of eyelets (36) being arrayed along the left and right upper sides of the shoe body, adjacent the left (28) and right (30) edges of the expansion opening (20), including terminal eyelets (38) adjacent the distal end of the expansion opening and next adjacent eyelets (40) next adjacent the terminal eyelets (38), the terminal eyelets (38) and the next adjacent eyelets (40) being those eyelets closest to the distal end (22) of the expansion opening and which are used for lacing purposes;
- (b) the lacing system comprising
 - (vi) first and second lacing elements (44, 46), including respective first and second lacing ends (48, 50), laced through the eyelets (36) along the left and right upper sides of the shoe body (12), said first (44) and second (46) lacing elements being anchored to the shoe body (12) at anchor points such that the respective lacing ends (48,

50) cannot, in routine lacing use, be displaced outwardly from the shoe body (12), the first and second lacing elements defining first (52) and second (54) lacing loops, the first and second lacing loops being threaded through a clasp (78, 278) along respective first and second different threading paths, with first and second loop ends (116) emerging from the clasp (78, 278), each loop having a first loop element extending between the clasp and a first one of the eyelets, and a second loop element extending between the clasp and the shoe body or a second one of the eyelets, the first and second loops passing through the clasp along paths according to which pulling the first and second loops in first and second different directions draws portions of the loop elements through the clasp.

70. A combination as in Claim 69, the first and second loops (52, 54) being defined by lacing elements (44, 46) extending outwardly away from the shoe body through a next adjacent eyelet and thence inwardly through a terminal eyelet.

71. A combination as in Claim 70, at least one of the lacing elements (44, 46) being anchored to the shoe body (12) at a location on the respective lacing element (44, 46) which is between the respective lacing end (48, 50) and a portion of the lacing element (44, 46) which is adjacent the terminal eyelet (38).

72. A combination as in Claim 69, at least one of the lacing elements (44, 46) being anchored to the shoe body (12) inside the foot-receiving cavity (70).

73. A combination as in Claim 69, at least one of the lacing elements being anchored to the shoe body (12) inside the foot-receiving cavity by a mechanical holding device (56).

74. A combination as in Claim 73 wherein the mechanical holding device (56) operates as an enlargement of the respective lacing element (44, 46), thereby blocking passage of the lacing element (44, 46) entirely out of the foot-receiving cavity (70) through the respective eyelet (36).

75. A combination as in Claim 73 wherein the mechanical holding device (56) is secured to the lacing element (44, 46) and is anchored to the shoe body (12) at a location displaced from the terminal eyelet (38).

76. A combination as in Claim 69, at least one of the lacing elements (44, 46) being anchored to the shoe body (12) by adhesive.

77. A combination as in Claim 69, the lacing loops (52, 54) entering the clasp (78, 278) at relatively lower locations in upright use orientation of the clasp, and emerging from the clasp at relatively higher locations.

78. A combination as in Claim 69, the lacing loops (52, 54) traversing said clasp (78, 278) in non-crossing paths.

79. A combination as in Claim 69, the lacing loops (52, 54) traversing said clasp (78) along mirror-image paths.

80. A combination as in Claim 69, the lacing loops (52, 54) entering the clasp (78, 278) through a centrally-disposed receiving aperture (86, 286) and exiting the clasp at exit apertures on opposing sides of the clasp.

81. A combination as in Claim 69, said clasp (78, 278) comprising a receptacle (80, 280), receiving the lacing elements (44, 46), and gripping structure (97) which grips

the lacing elements (44, 46) and thereby temporarily prevents withdrawal of the lacing elements (44, 46) from the clasp (78, 278).

82. A combination as in Claim 73, said clasp (78, 278) comprising a clasp receptacle (80, 280), receiving the lacing elements (44, 46), and gripping structure (97) which grips the lacing elements (44, 46) and thereby temporarily prevents withdrawal of the lacing elements (44, 46) from the clasp (78, 278).

83. A combination as in Claim 81, said clasp (78, 278) further comprising a cover (82, 282), wherein said cover (82, 282) can be opened and closed over said receptacle (80, 280), and wherein closing said cover (82, 282) positions said gripping structure (97, 297) for engaging said lacing elements (44, 46).

84. A combination as in Claim 83, said receptacle (80, 280) and said cover (82, 282) being structured such that raising said cover (82, 282) releases said lacing elements (44, 46) from engagement with said gripping structure (97).

85. A combination as in Claim 83, said gripping structure (97) being defined at least in part by said cover (82).

86. A combination as in Claim 83, said gripping structure (97, 297) being defined at least in part by said receptacle (80, 280).

87. A combination as in Claim 69, the lacing loops (52, 54) entering the clasp through a receiving aperture (86) and exiting the receptacle at first and second exit apertures (114) on opposing sides of the clasp, and wherein structures communicating with the first and second exit apertures operates, at least in part, as said gripping structure.

88. A combination as in Claim 69, said clasp comprising exit apertures (114), and wherein said gripping structure is in communication with said exit apertures such that the lacing elements can move between said exit apertures and said gripping structure when said clasp is configured for gripping said lacing elements.

89. A combination as in Claim 83 wherein said gripping structure (97) comprises at least one slot (110, 112) in said clasp (78, 278) between said receptacle (80, 280) and said cover (82, 282), expandable by translation of said cover (82, 282) with respect to said receptacle (80, 280).

90. A combination as in Claim 89, further comprising exit apertures (114) on opposing sides of said clasp (78), in communication with the at least one slot (110, 112).

91. A combination as in Claim 69, said clasp (78, 278, 378) further comprising at least one loop retainer effective to engage operative ends of the first (52) and second (54) loops, thereby to prevent inadvertent withdrawal of the first (52) and second (54) loops entirely out of said clasp (78, 278, 378).

92. A combination as in Claim 80, said gripping structure (297) comprising a one-way mechanical lacing gripper, enabling said lacing elements (44, 46) to pass through said clasp (278) along one or more paths extending away from the receiving aperture (286) and preventing casual withdrawal of said lacing elements (44, 46) from said clasp (278).

93. A combination as in Claim 83 wherein said cover (282) is a separate and distinct element, separable from said receptacle (280) for alternating closing said clasp (278), and opening said clasp (278) for access to said receptacle (280).

94. A combination as in Claim 83, further comprising latch structure (98, 100) on at least one of said receptacle (80) and said cover (82), and wherein said receptacle (80) and said cover (82) are cooperatively structured such that closure of said cover (82) over said receptacle (80), secured by said latch structure (98, 100), positions said gripping structure (97) for gripping engagement with said lacing elements (44, 46).

95. A combination as in Claim 69, said first and second lacing elements being embodied in a single lacing, said lacing being reverse laced through said first and second arrays of eyelets, said first and second lacing ends (48, 50) being anchored to said shoe body adjacent the proximal end (23) of the expansion opening, and wherein a portion of said lacing (42) extends across the expansion opening (20) between the eyelets in the first and second arrays of eyelets.